

# HeadStart Programme

## Qualitative Insight Report

School Implementation Interviews - April 2018

# Executive Summary

This report is the output of the second wave of interviews conducted with HeadStart schools. The interviews were conducted with school staff to primarily discuss the implementation of HeadStart and to explore certain elements of the programme, with the view to learn what is working and identify any opportunities for change.

Findings are based on eight in-depth interviews across four HeadStart schools.

Thematic analysis was applied across six key themes with the related issues identified below:

## Schools introduction to HeadStart

- Most staff were introduced to HeadStart by a senior member of staff within the school.
- Junior members of staff were described as often leading on delivery due to the limited capacity of senior staff.
- Staff recalled feeling of excitement when asked about their initial expectations of the programme, with this being especially evident in relation to staff training.
- In relation to the length of time taken for the commissioned services to start delivering interventions some staff had expected this to be available earlier.
- Special school and alternative provision staff described the HeadStart model as broad and not fully inclusive of the varied needs of all students.
- Assistance from the HeadStart team was described as supportive and helpful.
- The work of the HeadStart Participation Workers, especially in relation to their work supporting students and around the development of HeadStart services within the schools was mentioned by a number of staff members.
- Many schools highlighted they had been supporting each other, within the network of HeadStart schools. This often crossed districts but stayed within the same school designation.

## Student needs and involvement in HeadStart

- There was a varied response when staff explained their understanding of the degree to which young people have been involved in the development of HeadStart.
- Students already linked to interventions that support emotional wellbeing within the schools, and students who sit on school councils, were most likely to be associated with the development of HeadStart. Other students within the school were described as less likely to be involved.
- HeadStart Participation Workers were said to be valuable in facilitating the involvement and voice of students, in the development of the programme.
- Staff acknowledged it was likely there was only limited awareness of HeadStart among students and that more could be done to increase awareness of what was available.
- There were common themes across schools when discussing the level of need and challenges faced by their students:

- Students were described as being academically able but having emotional issues, and in some cases, the most able students were demonstrating the highest need.
- Staff reported the main issues affecting student's emotional wellbeing as being self-harm, depression, anxiety and lack of confidence.
- Students needing someone to talk to was raised on more than one occasion.

### Approach to wellbeing in schools

- The support in place for students with emotional issues and how schools currently approach wellbeing is varied.
- Several schools, especially the special schools and alternative settings, indicated that wellbeing issues were already identified and dealt with on a day to day basis due to the level of need of their students.
- They recognised that many students with identified needs were already supported by external agencies such as CAMHS, including Early Help or Specialist Children's services.
- Some schools expressed that finding support for students outside of school in the community was difficult and that there were too many delays accessing services needed.
- Some schools mentioned they already have a majority of the model of support HeadStart suggests in place, although, not as structured.
- It was recognised that it could be beneficial to adopt the model in schools where there is limited support in place around emotional wellbeing issues at present.
- Some schools described how HeadStart was running alongside already established systems in place to support students.
- Support already in place for students varied from safeguarding leads to school nurses and school counsellors.
- One school described how they have dedicated support staff, who fulfil a pastoral role. These staff are approached by students for support, as a relationship of trust had been built up over time within the school.

### HeadStart influence and supporting tools / training

- Schools having the opportunity to meet regularly as a community to discuss emotional wellbeing was seen as a benefit of being involved in HeadStart.
- Staff having time to focus on implementing the programme was described as advantageous.
- Schools explained how HeadStart had assisted to further develop support already in place for students through the resources provided.
- Special schools stated that although the HeadStart peer mentoring toolkit was useful, adaptations would need to be made to meet the needs of their students.
- HeadStart influenced one school's thoughts around the development of safe spaces for students.
- Some members of staff felt the Resilience Toolkit focussed their attention, while others saw it as being information dense and resource intensive.
- One member of staff expressed they preferred the electronic version of the toolkit to the hard copy.
- The inability to monitor progress against a benchmark was a drawback mentioned by one member of staff.

- Having a whole team developing the action plan, with different responsibilities across the school, was seen as a benefit.
- Receiving reports of daily domestic abuse incidents was described by one member of staff as shaping the way they manage safeguarding of students.
- Staff not in a safeguarding role within the school explained that they were not in direct receipt of daily domestic abuse incidents, which was raised as a potential barrier if the information was not passed on.
- The 'Introduction to HeadStart' training was described as being well received and provided an adequate overview of Domains Based Conversations (DBC) to equip participants with the skills to carry out the conversations.
- However, it was recognised that the training was insufficient to enable participants to lead training for other staff around DBCs.
- One member of staff commented that the presentation contained a lot of terminology and it was suggested that this could put people off.
- The Kate Cairns Associates Resilience Domains training was described as being more in-depth and assisted with additional ways to ask questions during a DBC.
- Staff mentioned not having enough time or finding it difficult to leave the school to attend a whole day of training.
- Some staff were aware of the opportunity to attend mindfulness training although they were yet to receive the training.

### Domains Based Conversations and putting them into practice

- Overall, DBCs were regarded as a useful tool by staff.
- The documentation was described as user-friendly and visually pleasing.
- In most schools, only one person was identified as conducting DBCs with students.
- There was a general view that, if done properly, DBCs took a long time to carry out to obtain the information needed.
- Some staff expressed they did not have time to complete DBCs in addition to their teaching role.
- There was recognition that some members of staff, who may be able to do DBCs, were yet to be trained in the schools, which may be contributing to why the responsibility to have DBCs fell to a limited number of staff.
- A drawback mentioned by one member of staff was the inability to transfer domains conversations to reactive situations.
- There was a lack a clarity as to when to was appropriate to have DBC, with many staff linking them only to receipt of domestic abuse incident reports and one member of staff linking them to commissioned services referrals.
- One member of staff expressed concern that although there may be a need for a DBC, they were not always accessible due to the level of need of some students.
- It was recognised that although some staff were having conversations around wellbeing with students, these were not being carried out as DBCs as the resources following training were not available to them.
- Providing practical techniques, such as workshops, 'how-to' guides, scenarios and videos for staff to access was described as an improvement that could be made following training.
- One member of staff highlighted a lack of staff awareness around the programme and the tools available.

## Wellbeing Measurement Framework

- The advantage of having survey data available to identify issues and its use as evidence to show improvements around emotional wellbeing was recognised by one school as a benefit.
- Challenges experienced varied depending on the school designation.
- Communication around completion of the survey and between the different HeadStart teams were areas identified by some schools as having the potential for improvement.
- One school stated that a clearer process for informing them which students had been opted out of the survey by parents would have been helpful.
- Some special school students were unable to take part due to the level of need.
- It was suggested that resources such as visual aids would have assisted the students in completing the survey within special schools.
- Another barrier mentioned was for students where English was not their first language.
- Technical issues included lost Wifi connectivity and difficulties extracting the zip file.
- Limited locations available within the school to carry out the survey also posed a problem.
- One member of staff said students were concerned about completing the survey, although this was resolved by explaining the reasons for the survey and how results would be used.
- There was a suggestion from a staff member that consistent clear messages need to be delivered by staff to students completing the survey.

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## Context

This report forms an agreed deliverable of the internal evaluation of HeadStart Kent. It is intended to outline the findings from qualitative data collection around schools' experience of the programme so far.

As can be seen in the HeadStart Theory of Change (see Appendix 1), ensuring that teachers and wider school staff are confident and knowledgeable in the wellbeing issues that students face, and are skilled in their ability to identify these, are key mechanisms to ensure that the wellbeing of students improves. During the implementation of the programme, various tools have been provided to schools to better equip them to do this. These interviews also intended to explore if, when and how these tools have been utilised.

Views will be collated at various stages throughout the phased rollout of the programme to identify any gaps or opportunities for development in future areas. Themes identified will also be examined alongside previously recorded experiences, such as the baseline interviews, to qualitatively assess changes made to the programme or improvements as a result of the programme.

This report has aimed to reflect the wide variety of engaged and enthusiastic voices we have encountered during these interviews, and where possible, contains anonymous direct quotes and extracts from the interviews for each point made.

# Methodology

Due to the phased rollout of HeadStart Kent across different areas over five years, the local evaluation identified the need to explore schools' experiences of the implementation of the programme in the initial areas, with the aim being to learn what has worked and identify any potential opportunities for development in future areas.

In June 2017 a topic guide was developed and five HeadStart schools were invited to participate in interviews. With the end of school year approaching, several schools were unable to take part before the holidays, however, schools were approached again on the commencement of the new academic year in September and all interviews were conducted before the Christmas holiday.

Schools were selected to take part to ensure the designation of all schools involved in the programme were represented. Most schools interviewed were engaged since the beginning of Phase 3. The level of seniority within the school of each staff member interviewed, and degree to which they have been involved in HeadStart, varied across all that participated.

This report contains themes gathered across eight interviews in four schools. Interviews were held face to face with trained interviewers following a semi-structured format, lasting roughly 30 minutes to an hour each. This allowed for full exploration of the topic guide, which included but was not limited to:

- Explanation of the interview focus and approach
- Explanation of how data would be used
- Informed and signed consent process
- Introductory questions around the school, its students and their families, and the teacher/school staff member's role
- An exploration of how they were introduced to HeadStart, their expectations and their opportunity to shape change
- An exploration of how involved young people were
- An exploration of how HeadStart may have influenced the school's thinking around resilience and emotional wellbeing and any tools/training that may have assisted
- An exploration around the use of domains based conversations
- An exploration around the communication and implementation of the Wellbeing Measurement Framework survey

Interviews were recorded and transcribed in full for thematic analysis using the MAXqda software package. This analysis was performed following stages of data familiarisation, initial coding and development of a thematic framework for structured analysis. This framework allowed for themes to be contrasted across interviews to find overarching patterns and disparities.

The key themes resulting from this analysis are recorded in the next section.

# Key findings

## Schools introduction to HeadStart

Most staff interviewed were **introduced to HeadStart by a senior member of staff** within the school. It was explained that senior staff within the schools were involved in initial meetings at the beginning of Phase 3, when schools were approached to be part of the programme. Subsequently, due to the limited capacity of senior management, **junior members of staff were asked to lead on delivery of the programme.**

*“One of our Associate Principals was the senior member of staff who was approached to be part of [the programme] said to me, can I come to meetings with him, and then can I do [delivery] for him, because senior management are extremely busy.”*

*“I think the middle leadership are the ones who actually run with it, but the senior lead is the one who get the letters and sign on the dotted line and get the first draft of the paperwork. And, you know, realistically they don't have the time to prioritise to think; I'm going to look at all this HeadStart paperwork and then it goes into the to-do drawer, and then six months later when the project is launched it then comes to us.”*

Staff recalled feelings of excitement when discussing their initial expectations of the programme. This was **especially evident in relation to the staff training that would be provided to help to support their student's emotional wellbeing.**

*“It sounded amazing to me because I thought it's something to help people's mental health, it's just so overdue. I was very, very excited about it, to be honest.”*

*“It's the building up of the resilience of the staff as well. I think they'll then be able to pass that on to the students who are vulnerable because the training we'll get will enable us to be that little bit of a support system. Even if we're not counsellors or doctors or psychotherapists we've got that little bit of enhanced knowledge that will support us. I think the training will be really important.”*

However, in **relation to the length of time taken for the commissioned services to start delivering interventions, some staff had expected this to be available earlier.** Many spoke of the delay in the support being made available and the perceived lack of communication around this.

*“It always felt as though it was imminent, you know, it's coming soon, it's coming soon. I don't think there was any time limit put on it”*

*"I thought everything, once it happened, I thought everything was going to be there from day one. So everything that we could possibly get, possibly referring to, was going to be there from the very beginning. I don't know, maybe that's because I come from a different position. Maybe people [from HeadStart] have worked longer to tender contracts and commission services. Whereas in education I have never done that. I wasn't aligned with the process of how that was actually going to work. And I think maybe it would've been helpful if we knew that from day one."*

When asked if there was an opportunity to shape the programme within their schools, **special school and alternative provision staff described the current model as "quite broad" and not inclusive of the needs of all students**, although it was recognised that adaptations could be made when possible.

It was expressed that the **varied needs of students did not appear to be taken into consideration when designing the model** and that it may have been beneficial for school staff delivering the programme to be involved in the design.

*"I think because obviously it is a model that is quite broad to have a model that will work for 10 year olds and 16 year olds alike, without taking in to account children with additional needs [...] so some of the tools I was concerned as to how much our children would be able to access them [...] it seems to be there are quite a few special schools involved and I think for that reason and that much money that perhaps that could have been taken into consideration with sort of more adaptive tools."*

*"There have been quite a few meetings we could attend and talk through [the model]; they have always listened to people's opinions. I think [HeadStart] have allowed us to adapt around our children but I think what I would like to do is include all of them but it's just not possible just with some of the need types within the school."*

*"The people who are actually hitting the ground running with it and working with it weren't there when it was designed. So that's not as beneficial [...] HeadStart should have] come into the establishments, more particularly the slightly quirky ones like us where you wear many hats."*

Staff described the **assistance from the HeadStart team as "supportive" and "really helpful"**.

A number of staff members mentioned the how the **HeadStart Participation Workers had been supporting students and also helping to with the development of HeadStart services within the school**.

*"I couldn't fault the support we've received. I can't fault that."*

*"I think [the Participation Workers are] very good. They've got good rapport with the kids as well. They do some good activities."*

A number of schools also highlighted the **support they had provided each other, within the network of HeadStart schools**. For those mentioning this collaboration, the support described often crossed districts but stayed within school designation.

*“Our headteacher and their headteacher used to work together in a previous school, so they have a professional relationship [...] Then he sent us their teacher [leading on HeadStart] and we just talked it through, because obviously they’ve just had their domains based training. They just wanted to know from that; what impact did that have on you? How did your staff receive it? How did you promote it? And we were just talking that through; just some information sharing really.”*

## Student needs and involvement in HeadStart

There was a **varied response when staff explained their understanding of the degree to which young people have been involved in the development of the programme**. One HeadStart ambition is to ensure diverse groups of young people are involved in the development of the programme, especially those who are vulnerable and more likely to benefit from the transformation of services<sup>1</sup>.

Staff identified students already linked to interventions that support emotional wellbeing within the school, such as anti-bullying ambassadors or peer mentors, as **most likely to be associated with the development of HeadStart**. Staff noted that students who sit on the school council were also more likely to be involved. Other students within the school were described as included to a lesser degree.

*“There’s a massive link between anti-bullying [ambassadors] and HeadStart. I would argue that the students that are on that committee are quite involved with HeadStart but I would argue to a lesser extent for students who aren’t yet on that program.”*

*“I know the school council is focusing on some of the things from HeadStart. Obviously, we’ve got the peer mentors. They are organising an assembly in the end of this year or start of next year. So, the whole school is aware of who our peer mentors are and the process that they can use to support [students] ...”*

**HeadStart Participation Workers were said to be valuable in facilitating the involvement and voice of students in the development of the programme** through their work at SpeakOut and the development of safe spaces and peer mentoring within the schools. One member of staff expressed the difficulty in engaging students after school or during break times but noted that with ongoing engagement from the Participation Workers, this was being achieved.

*“We’ve had a lot of SpeakOut meetings. They’re not big groups. It’s often hard to get kids to stay after school or give up their lunch time, but there’s a group slowly forming, and they’ve had the opportunity to talk with [the workers]. I know they’ve met with some of them out in the community as well, out at youth clubs. So [the students] have had their say about what they want.”*

One member of staff described **an innovative way the students were involved communicating about the programme to school staff**, as it was identified that email was not always the most effective method of communicating with colleagues.

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<sup>1</sup> KCC Early Help, 2016. *HeadStart Kent Phase 3 Case for Investment* p.38

*“I needed to get some information to the staff about the anti-bullying programme and the peer mentoring programme. We had the students themselves delivering to the staff, which was quite fun. I remember, they really stepped up. And we broke staff up into small groups and they met with the individual students. One group of students introduced HeadStart to the entire staff, so now they're all aware. That was really good, just a way to get it out to them. If you send an e-mail out it's not something that people can get to, so having the kids deliver it to them, I thought, was really powerful.”*

When explaining how aware of HeadStart students were in their school, some members of staff acknowledged it was likely there was only a **limited awareness among students** and that more could be done to increase awareness. One member of staff expressed that there was a **need for students to be made aware of what is available to them.**

*“Students were involved [in the school survey] [...] through having taken the survey, that's what they were aware of [...] they did see all of [the introduction and PowerPoint] so they were aware in that way [...] but there is a lot more to do to get [HeadStart] out there.”*

Although staff from all designations were spoken to, there were **common themes across most schools when discussing the level of need and challenges faced by their students.** Some of these themes echoed findings in the baseline report<sup>2</sup> last year.

Students were described as “*vulnerable*” and “*from a social emotional perspective in very need of the support*”.

Many described their students as being **academically able but having emotional issues.** In one case, a member of staff indicated “*the most able [students] are the ones demonstrating the highest need*” with a supposed correlation between those most able also having support from services such as Early Help or Specialist Children’s Services.

Staff reported the **main issues affecting student’s emotional wellbeing as being self-harm, depression, anxiety and lack of confidence.** Secondary to these, attendance at school was highlighted as an issue. **Students “needing someone to talk to”** was also raised on more than one occasion.

*“We have a lot of referrals for things like self-harm, depression. Our counselling waiting list is massive, so I think a lot of it is just having someone to talk to. I think having someone to talk to they can open up a bit more, whereas I think previously students were feeling like they had to battle through things on their own.”*

*“Generalised anxiety is the highest level [of need] that we’ve got. Generalised anxiety and self-harm would be the two areas. There’s a safeguarding board [in reception] and underneath there’s a leaflet rack and the gaps on that leaflet rack are all the leaflets that were once related to self-harm. They’re the ones that went first. Next the HeadStart ones have gone after that. So, they’re the two areas; anxiety and self-harm are our two biggest areas [of concern].”*

<sup>2</sup> KCC SBDI, 2017. *Insight Report Qualitative Baseline – July 2017* p.6

## Approach to wellbeing in schools

As identified in the baseline report<sup>3</sup>, the **support in place for students with emotional issues and how schools currently approach wellbeing is varied.**

Several schools, especially special schools and alternative settings, indicated that **wellbeing issues were already identified and dealt with on a day to day basis due to the level of need of their students.**

*“I would say obviously we’re kind of dealing with emotional wellbeing problems generally on a day-to-day basis anyway because of the level of vulnerability of our students. So that’s just part of our staff ethos I suppose.”*

It was recognised that many students with identified needs were **already supported by external agencies such as CAMHS, including Early Help or Specialist Children’s services.** One school explained how parents were *“very frightened of any organisation”* but also that parents were keen to have those organisations ‘diagnose’ their child.

*“Agencies come in to work with the students who they’ve been referred to, [to deal with emotional wellbeing issues]. So that would be students who’ve been referred to CAMHS or who social services is supporting. I mean a lot of the students that we work with the majority of them have external agencies working with them anyway.”*

*“I’ve got parents that are absolutely frightened of social services because they’ve got a previous issue, so you do have to be really, really careful. They’re very keen to get their children diagnosed with something when actually diagnosis isn’t necessarily what the child needs.”*

Some schools expressed that **finding support for students outside of school in the community was difficult** and that there were **too many delays accessing services needed**, such as counselling.

Some participants described feeling that they **already have a majority of the model of support HeadStart suggests in place**, although, one member of staff recognised it was not as structured. Another member of staff described how they felt it could be beneficial to adopt the HeadStart model in schools where there is limited support in place for students around emotional wellbeing issues at present.

*“I did feel personally that as a school, we were doing a lot of [work around emotional wellbeing already]. It was just wasn’t structured as HeadStart suggests but we could have ticked off all the things that HeadStart was suggesting.”*

<sup>3</sup> KCC SBDI, 2017. *Insight Report Qualitative Baseline – July 2017* p.9

*“For a school that potentially doesn’t not have good systems in place, they could just adopt [HeadStart] and it could cover all bases, but I think our school already had quite a well-established system in place, so it could just be a case of taking some of the good bits out of [HeadStart] and keeping what we already have.”*

Some schools described how **HeadStart was running alongside already established systems in place to support students**, with one member of staff commenting that it “*maximised*” the suite of support available.

*“I think because wellbeing has always played such a significant part [at this school] there are already systems in place, so at the moment there are systems in place running along HeadStart coming in.”*

*“The most recent domains based conversation [that happened ... the student was] referred to CAMHS and we were getting support from the NSPCC. So actually sometimes [HeadStart] works in conjunction with [other support]. Sometimes [the domains conversation] might be the only thing we do. Sometimes we might not do that at all; we might follow another route.”*

**Support already in place for students varied from safeguarding leads to school nurses and school counsellors.** One school described how they had implemented **dedicated support staff, who take on a pastoral role** to address a range of concerns. The concerns were explained as still being raised by conventional routes, such as through form tutors, parents and safeguarding concerns, but as a **relationship of trust had been built up over time within the school**, students themselves were directly seeking assistance from the support staff.

*“I work with the children, generally one-to-one, I don’t teach. Specifically, I’m here for issues, problems, positives, support and things like that [...] I would say, more often than not, it’s not us that identify [issues], pupils are quite open here in our school and they would just come to us [...] I would just say the openness of staff [has enabled this relationship to happen], letting children know one, that we’re here for them, and two, that we support them in the right way. I often have students that say to me don’t tell mum and dad. I have to say to them that I have to if I have to, and then, they come back to me again. They’ve got that trust that we are doing the right thing for them, and I think it just happened over the years.”*

## HeadStart influence and supporting tools / training

When describing how HeadStart may have influenced their thinking around emotional wellbeing, it was recognised by one member of staff that the **opportunity for the schools to meet regularly as a community to discuss the agenda was beneficial**. Being given **time to focus on implementing the programme** was also mentioned as being advantageous.

*“The opportunity that it, we were all in it together. That’s what brought us together. We would never have sat down and started talking about mental health in the area, unless HeadStart said that there is this opportunity for you. The need for monthly meetings keeps us coming together.”*

*“From the beginning I’ve said, I am here to support you with the instruction for the HeadStart project. So, whereas everybody else is trying to do the other jobs that they do, I can at least stand back at times and kind of just focus on this. I’ve got the advantage there I suppose.”*

Many schools explained how they already had support in place for students, such as anti-bullying ambassadors, but it was seen that **HeadStart had assisted to further develop this support**, either due to the availability of materials provided or by helping them to compare their current approach to student support alongside the HeadStart tools, with the school then seeing the benefit in adapting current support to achieve the desired outcomes.

*“Last year we had another company doing a lot of our wellbeing and development for young people. It’s a strong programme but it’s also very expensive and this year we haven’t got them. So the peer mentoring programme I started with [the students], I now need to continue, but obviously I can’t without materials. I’m going to be using the HeadStart peer mentoring programme.”*

*“Moving from anti-bullying ambassadors to peer mentors, and completely changing our buddying system in school as well. To create one holistic role, that lots of different roles touched on and potentially didn’t do justice to what they were trying to do. I would say that’s what HeadStart has changed [in the school].”*

A member of staff from a special school stated that the **although the HeadStart peer mentoring toolkit was useful, it would need to be adapted to meet the needs of their students** and the role students take on would need to be adjusted to consider their vulnerability.

*“I would love to be able to adopt [the peer mentoring] model [...] but they might be Year 9 but they are not functioning enough to be able to cope with giving advice on something because of the vulnerability of our children, because of their needs [...] I don’t think we should be putting other vulnerable young people in a position to have to try and deal with those [issues...] We are always having these battles in special school setting, so I think it just comes back to that really and it’s not that we are being lazy but I think for HeadStart they need to understand that for us, any resource they provide us with is great and we appreciate it, but then we have to go away have a look at it, pull it apart, before we can even [use] it.”*

One member of staff mentioned how **HeadStart had influenced their thoughts around the development of safe spaces for students**. It was suggested that, in the absence of HeadStart, an area may have been developed anyway, but the thinking around what a 'safe space' meant would not have happened. They said HeadStart had *"changed their outlook on what a safe space is."*

*"I would say we might've developed one area but in terms of having an idea about it being a safe space for young people, that would never have happened. That would never have happened [without HeadStart]."*

When discussing other areas schools felt HeadStart had influenced their thinking around emotional wellbeing, the work with the Resilience Toolkit was mentioned. Some staff felt the **toolkit focussed their attention**, while others described it as *"information dense"*, *"intense"* and that there *"was a lot to it"*. One member of staff said they **preferred to "dip into it digitally" to reference relevant sections** rather than using the hard copy version.

*"It gave us clear focus about what we needed to look at."*

*"It makes you have a good think about what you've already got."*

After completing each chapter, one member of staff said the inability to monitor progress or check their action plan against a benchmark felt *"odd"*.

*"I read the chapter and I thought, okay, so how do I get checked on whether I've done it or not? There's nothing to submit, no cheat sheets or anything like that. And I thought, how do you prove that you've finished this chapter? And [I was told it was checked] just by discussing it with each other and knowing that you've done that. It's just for us to know as opposed to prove to HeadStart that we've done it, and that felt a bit odd for me."*

One school explained how **a whole team, with different responsibilities across the school, developed their action plan** from the toolkit. HeadStart was embedded in staff performance management within this school. The school's senior HeadStart lead said this approach was beneficial as they were supported in moving the work forward, whereas other schools did not have this.

*"I had members of staff who had it in their performance management. I was really lucky that the situation I was faced with was one where I could, I only had support in moving it forward. And then I had the tools to ask the right questions, to formulate an action plan that was beneficial for everyone."*

Receiving daily notifications of domestic abuse incidents was seen by one member of staff as **shaping the way they manage safeguarding of students**. They described it was being a “*massive improvement*” as previously information from other KCC departments was not always supplied to the school in a timely manner, or at all.

*“Receiving daily notifications of domestic abuse [...] really has benefited us on whether we actually intervene with a young person, or whether we just have that young person in the back of our mind that there is something going on. So that has been a big influence for us in shaping the way we manage safeguarding [...] We never got any of that information from Early Help or Specialist Children’s Services. It was never coming to us. We might get a phone call from Social Services, I don’t know, three weeks after an event, when it’s been referred to them. And then they’ve got their 72 hours when they need to have spoken with the school. But to actually come into work at 7:00 in the morning and I’ve got an email waiting for me, or later in the day I sit back down at my desk and the emails come in; that is light years ahead of where we’ve ever been. So we can say that we were getting it, but we never were.”*

Several staff interviewed **did not have a safeguarding role within the school, so they were not in directly in receipt of daily domestic abuse incidents**. One staff member was certain that the safeguarding lead who receives the daily notifications would make the association to HeadStart and pass the information to relevant staff, if they felt the sharing of this information was needed. Conversely, another member of staff said they were “*stuck in the middle*” and that there were difficulties accessing the information as they were not in a safeguarding role. Although, it was recognised this was likely an internal issue that could be rectified.

*“The other difficult thing is with the domestic abuse notifications. Things like that can only come through to a DSO, I’m not a DSO, so already, I suppose not HeadStart’s fault maybe that’s more on our part [...] It’s fine for a mainstream secondary comp because they will have a SENCO and that SENCO will also be a DSO, so they can come in in the morning they can log on there will see on their EGRESS that there has been an incident and they can deal with that first hand, whereas for me I can’t access that, so therefore I’m a bit stuck in the middle.”*

When discussing training staff have attended through the programme, the **‘Introduction to HeadStart’ training, delivered by HeadStart staff, was described as being well received and an adequate overview of Domains Based Conversations (DBC)s to equip participants with the skills to carry out the conversations**. It was recognised by some staff that, as with all new tools, some staff may need regular refresher training, or support from colleagues, to increase their confidence in carrying out the conversations. Another school explained how some staff had received additional in-depth training around DBCs from the HeadStart team.

*“It’s very good and I quite like a refresh if I’m honest, because [the training] happened when HeadStart first started. We were getting ourselves going as a school, and then only recently I’ve been doing a few domains-based questions, so it would be quite nice to have a little bit of a refresh...”*

*“What I would normally do [to empower staff] [...] if I pass [domains conversations] to a member of staff and they say I’m not confident sitting down having this conversation, I would either buddy them or do one with them, be the person on the receiving end. Or I’d get them to work with [someone who more regularly has the conversations as they] would be able to give them that working understanding of what that looks like.”*

One member of staff expressed that the initial one-hour ‘Introduction to HeadStart’ training was **“not sufficient” to enable participants to lead training for other staff around DBCs**. Another comment in relation to this training was that the **presentation contained a lot of terminology**, which seemed *“cryptic”* and it was suggested this could *“put people off”*.

*“There are lots of ‘words’, everything has got a term and I think that if you are in HeadStart and you work on it every single day you probably know that. Everything has got these weird and wonderful names and it just becomes a little bit cryptic. To throw around terms like a domain conversation, people are like what on earth is a domain conversation, resilience hubs, it’s lots of this terminology [...] there [are these] phrases being thrown around which could put people off. I’ve probably got my head around it but I can imagine there was quite a few people in there sort of thinking, what do they mean by this and that.”*

A further element of training mentioned by one member of staff was the Kate Cairns Associates (KCA) one-day Resilience Domains training. This training was described as **more in-depth and assisting with additional ways to ask questions during a DBC**.

*“Going on that full day [training] gave me a little bit more, it helped a lot more with the kind of questions to ask. Before it was just, how do you feel that your family support you with your hobbies, kind of, thing. But, actually, there were more ways of asking that and that day’s training helped with that.”*

Concern was raised around **staff not having enough time to attend a whole day of training**. It was suggested that if the second day of online training could be made available, without the need to attend the first day of ‘classroom’ training, it may be more accessible for staff who are interested in participating.

*“Freeing enough people to get out for training is another matter again [...] I don’t know whether people can access [the online training] without having a full day’s training first. Then if other staff are interested they can do it that way, because online training seems to be the way to go for a lot of people.”*

When discussing attendance at training and also HeadStart meetings one school expressed that, due to their provision, it was **difficult for staff to leave the school**.

*“It’s very difficult for any of us as members of staff to be able to leave the school to go to external meetings about HeadStart because of staffing. Even though we might have been booked in to go to a training session, if somebody is off sick you can’t go because we have to have the staff to young people ratios. [Our HeadStart lead] has been great in that she said that any training that is probably going to be delivered within HeadStart, she will come in here to deliver it to us here.”*

Some members of staff were **aware of the opportunity to attend mindfulness training**, although, they were yet to receive the training.

## Domains Based Conversations and putting them into practice

Overall, **DBC**s were regarded as a useful tool by staff. There were positive comments around how the use of domains can provide a structured conversation and the benefit of having a holistic view of a student was also mentioned. **The documentation was described as “user-friendly” and was also considered to be visually pleasing.** While one member of staff did comment that it took some time to understand the domain definitions, they noted that the guidance paperwork proved helpful in assisting with this.

*“I like how structured [the domains based conversations] are. It’s nice to have a bit of structure when you’re having a conversation with someone [...] I think it shows the student, as well as the person [having the conversation] with them, a quick overview. Half the time [when you have these discussions with students], I think they must forget what you’ve spoken about and what they’ve replied. When you’re having the conversations and you fill out something like that, automatically, anyone looking at a grid and see all green, automatically you know it’s good. If it’s covered in red, you know there’s a concern. Visually, I think that’s really good and I quite like using that.”*

In most schools, it was identified that **only one person within the school was conducting DBCs with students.** There was a general view that, **if done properly, DBCs took a long time to obtain the information needed.** Some staff expressed they **did not have time to complete DBCs in addition to their teaching role.**

*“A domains conversation done properly can take a while, depending on the child [...] you've got to give at least half an hour I think. I've done a couple that have been longer [...] one took me about 45 minutes, and the other one took me over an hour. It wasn't [that] I was having trouble getting information out of the child, but once you start them talking they just want to talk.”*

*“In terms of being on a one to one basis for carrying out these domain conversations with students there isn't the time in the day for me to do that, because I teach all day [...] I feel that I'm doing a bit of injustice just because I'm never going to get a quality conversation in 15 minutes and all the other times I teach”*

*“With one pupil, it took me about 20 minutes. She wasn't very talkative, so it was very basic. Another pupil, I had her for about 50 minutes. We have only one lunchtime for an hour here and we try to reduce taking [students] out of lessons unless necessary. It is quite long, but then it's long because it's structured and you get the information you need.”*

There was also recognition that **some members of staff, who may be able to do DBCs, were yet to be trained.** This, coupled with the lack of time some staff reported having to carry out the conversations, meant the **responsibility to hold DBCs fell to a limited number of staff.** Some suggestions from staff to increase the number of staff having conversations were for inexperienced staff to be mentored, and for learning from training to be cascaded through internal staff meetings.

*“We’d hoped there would be more staff doing [domains conversations]. But teaching staff I don’t think would unless they were really passionate about the course. I mean, we’re not saying you can’t do [the course], but they can if they want to do it. It’s about time for a lot of people [...] What I’ve said is, because of the way my role is at the moment I will do those [domains based] conversations if you haven’t got the time. So that’s what we’re doing at the moment. The next step would then be for me to come in with you while you do a domains conversation. Then I can leave you to get on with it the next time. So that’s how we’re hoping it will go.”*

*“The other two members of staff that went with me on the trainings for the domain based conversations are teachers, so they would always send people to me [to have a DBC] [...] I would hope more staff here will have the training. Maybe for [those] that have the right training to give an overview and train the rest of the school in staff meetings [...] I would assume that definitely the other two [members of staff] will have the training, because we don’t teach. We are available.”*

While having a structured conversation was seen as a benefit, a drawback mentioned by one member of staff was the **inability to transfer the domains conversations to reactive situations**, as they viewed DBCs as needing to be planned, with all supporting paperwork to hand.

*“It could be quite hard if somebody bumps into you on the corridor for example. You want to have to say, oh, let’s reschedule for when I’ve got all [of my paperwork] available [...] I can have a five-minute conversation with somebody on the corridor and maybe not have asked some questions I needed to. I try and have a plan fully covered and prepared in case I need to do [a domains conversation].”*

When discussing the **pathway to a domains conversation there was a lack of clarity over when a DBC was appropriate to have**. Many staff linked this to the receipt of daily domestic abuse incidents, with one staff member commenting this was the only time they would decide to have a DBC. Another school linked the **decision to have a DBC to the referral to commissioned services**.

*“We made a decision; our domains based conversation would literally come out of the domestic abuse notifications that are coming in.”*

*“What we’re doing at the moment about the domains conversations is, because we’ve got two lots of referrals going at the moment, we’ve got the family transition, and we’ve got the intensive mentoring, so we’re focussing on them. For the intensive mentoring we have to have a domains conversation.”*

One a member of staff expressed concern that although **there may be a need for a DBC, they were not always accessible due to the level of need of some students**.

*"[Because of] some of those children's needs, I wouldn't be able to follow that up with a domain type conversation, so we are aware of those children where there is domestic abuse in the home but not necessarily the children we can engage with on a HeadStart basis."*

One member of staff mentioned that conversations around wellbeing, following a welfare concern, were being held with students by other members of staff, although, these were **not being carried out as DBCs as the resources following training were not available to them.**

*"I've got a pack and if I have a conversation with people, I will use that to support me with the questions. I do use the grid for the pupils and a lot of [the supporting] information. I got that from my training. [The other members of staff] obviously have to have that training [to get the] pack. We probably all had a similar conversation with our pupils, just not that focused [...] All three of us are doing it, but mine, when I'm told to do a domains-based question, I get my paperwork, I read over it and I do it in a specific way. Whereas when they've got a child with a concern, they just go with the flow, do what they know best."*

Another member of staff suggested an overall improvement, which could complement training provided, and enable staff to put into practice learning on a regular basis, could be to **provide practical techniques**, such as workshops, "how-to" guides, scenarios and videos for staff to access.

*"I think workshops for staff to be able to be given those [scenarios] and put those into practice. Even if it was just trying it on each other. You're given a scenario and the tools, this is what you could use. Things like that would help. I think things like having something online that you can just go to and select [...] So how-tos would be really helpful and then things like videos. Seeing an expert put it into practice."*

Although it was reported that HeadStart was received positively by staff in schools when it was first introduced to them, one staff member highlighted a **lack of staff awareness of the programme and the tools available amongst school staff.** Another staff member expressed an excitement to learn more, but was not fully aware of what was available to staff with regards to training, suggesting information may not be filtering down to all school staff.

*"When we came out of that first session [with staff], it was really well received, everyone was talking about it. And then there was the assembly when we came back and since then, not much has happened. I think it's very difficult for staff to have conversations about things if we haven't been introduced to it."*

## Wellbeing Measurement Framework

When discussing communication of the Wellbeing Measurement Framework (WMF) and implementation of the survey, one school recognised the **advantage of having survey data available** to identify issues students may be facing and also how the data could be used as evidence to show improvements around emotional wellbeing, although, **several technical and logistical challenges were identified** by staff interviewed.

*“When HeadStart came in I was like, hey, this is really good. [The WMF] is something that schools can use to show that progress [around emotional wellbeing], because there’s loads of data on academic progress. But where is the information that’s showing how the students are progressing and what they’re facing as they go through secondary school that we can work with. I think it’s absolutely vital. It can’t just be about their academic progress.”*

The challenges explained by staff **varied depending on the school designation**. Staff in larger schools described finding the process time consuming due to the volume of students needing to take part in the survey, with there being particular difficulties when trying to ‘mop up’ students yet to take part. One member of staff described the process as *“totally manic the whole time”*.

*“I think that the first round of surveys was okay, but then invariably it was our more challenging students that we were chasing up towards the end because they might not have been attending, or they might have been with our SENCO. It took me a good probably two weeks of bringing in the students in very small groups to then do the survey with them.”*

An area identified by some schools with the **potential for improvement related to communication with schools around the survey**, with particular reference made to the communication of the survey completion rate. It was expressed that communication around this was not clear and there were challenges in reporting back reasons students had not completed the survey, to aid monitoring of the completion rate.

*“What wasn’t made very clear to us, that seemed to be a changing figure, was the threshold of percentage completion. I think it was a; get as many as you can get done. And then suddenly, from somewhere, someone was bandying around 97%. [...] from the outset [if we were told] this is the number we want to have completed to make this a viable return, would’ve been helpful.”*

*“There was always that few who you never got to [do the survey] [...] I think that was the hardest bit because we had to report back on why they hadn’t done it. That just took so long because I had to go on to an individual kid and check their attendance.”*

One member of staff stated there could have been a **clearer process for informing them which students had been opted out of the survey** by their parents or carers, rather the students being omitted from the password files supplied, as this would have given them a clearer picture of those that needed to complete the survey from the beginning.

Another member of staff mentioned they found the **“triangle of communication” between themselves, HeadStart and the National Learning Team confusing** and suggested this could be more helpful if centralised.

With regards to the accessibility of the survey for students with different needs, a member of special school staff explained how some of their **students were unable to take part due to the level of need**, although, with support from staff, those that were able to take part participated well. It was suggested that **resources such as visual aids, would have assisted the students in completing the survey.**

*“I had to sit with every child [to do the survey] [...] none of our children that would have been able to log on and fill out that questionnaire accurately without an adult there to read [...] I said could we take those questions, simplify them or turn them into a format using symbols, but we weren't allowed to do that because it would affect the control of the study. I do understand but I maybe could have done [additional surveys] having had the right resources.”*

Another barrier to completion of the survey, by students with different needs, was for those where **English was not their first language.** One member of staff explained they had a number of English Additional Language students but did not have the capacity for translation of the survey.

Technical issues voiced by one member of staff related to **lost Wifi connectivity** due to the high volume of students completing the survey at any one time and the **limited locations available within the school to carry out the survey**, as IT suites were being used for exams. Another member of staff mentioned they had **difficulties extracting the zip file** provided, which caused delays commencing the survey.

*“I just thought that I was going to get a great big load of students into the hall with the little portable laptops that we've got, and they could all log on and do it and I could get it done in a day. In reality we have WiFi boosters in the ceilings of the buildings and you can only actually have so many people log on at once in an area. I couldn't use the IT suites because they were all booked in for Year 11 exam practices, so I had no access to IT suites. But even then, it would have only 30 at a time that could go through there. I thought, okay, just get them in the hall and do it all at once. I had a lot of kids in a hall with laptops that were all, like, I can't get on it, and it was pandemonium, it was really crazy. The next day the IT techs came up with a system and we just had a few in at a time, and it was literally, get them in, get them done, get them out, get the next lot in. It wasn't easy [...]”*

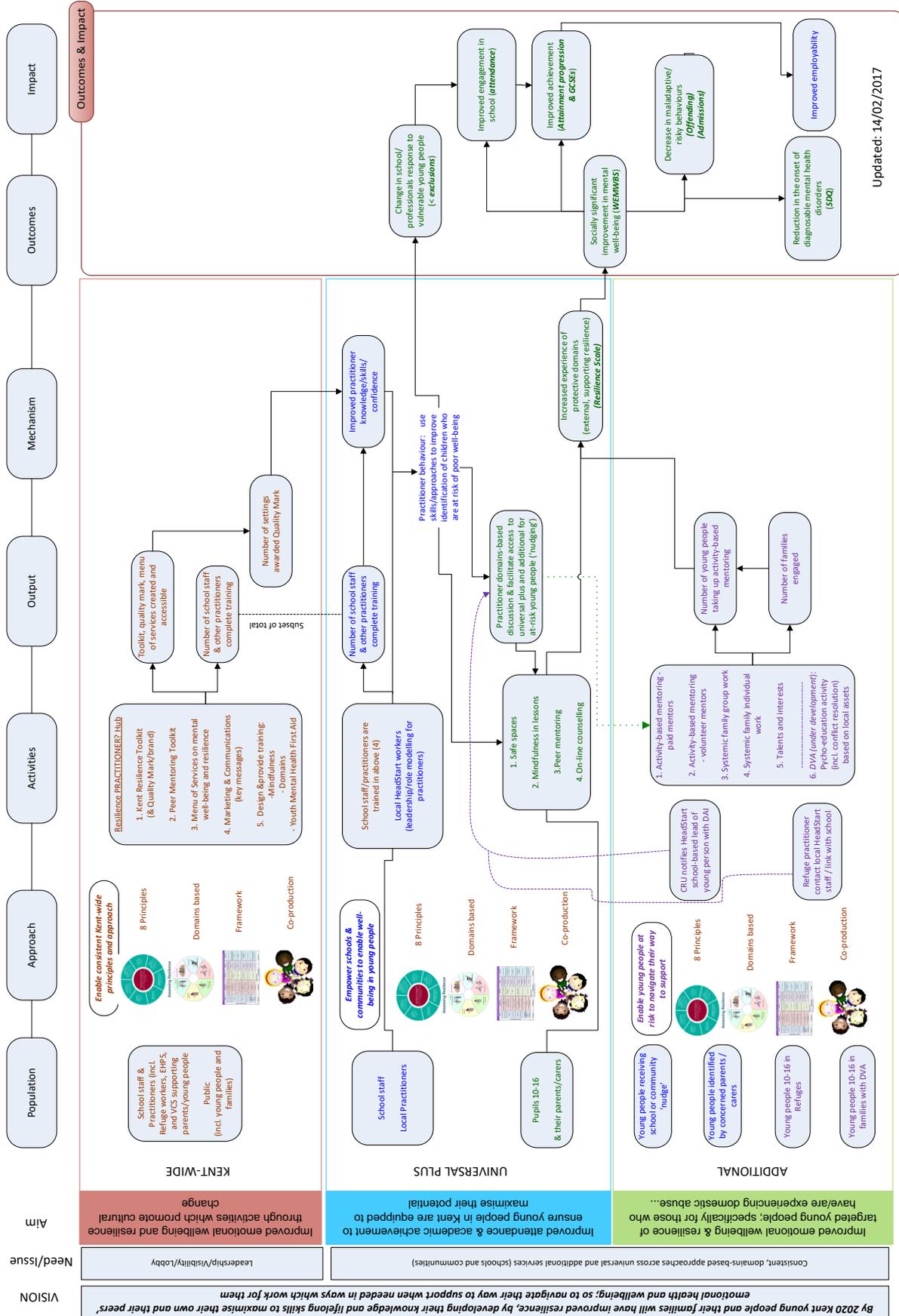
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When asked how they thought the students perceived the survey, one member of staff said the **students were “concerned”** that by taking part and answering truthfully, it may cause problems for themselves or their families. It was explained that this situation was resolved by the school clearly communicating to students that the survey was confidential and added that by taking part they may be helping in the development of support across the school. One member of staff suggested there was a need for a **consistent clear message to be delivered by staff to students completing the survey.**

*“With our students it’s about communicating it well in advance and then being crystal clear on what it’s about.”*

It was also recognised the surveys took place in the setting where tests and exams are conducted in the school and this association may have added to the students’ concern.

# Appendix 1 – HeadStart Kent Theory of Change



Strategic Business Development and Intelligence lead the authority on the process of gathering and analysing information regarding customers, in order to build deeper and more effective customer relationships and improve strategic decision making. We deliver high quality reports which combine data and analysis from relevant sources, using a wide range of sophisticated and professional methodologies, probing issues of interest, and drawing out valid, robust and conclusive findings.

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